

REMARKS

Applicant has added new claims 27-55.

Applicant respectfully submits that the originally-filed disclosure (i.e., the originally-filed drawings and specification, including the claims) fully supports the subject matter recited in the new claims. For example, regarding new independent claims 33, 39, 42, and 53, each of those claims includes all of the language of pending claims 1, 11, 14, and 24, respectively, except for the recitation(s) of “in the form of knobs.” Accordingly, new claims 33, 39, 42, and 53 should be fully supported by the original disclosure.

The originally-filed disclosure also supports all of the subject matter recited in the new dependent claims added in this Amendment. In particular, the as-filed disclosure supports new dependent claims 27-29, 31, 32, 38, 41, 51, and 55, which recite rigid sheet flooring material comprising wood. For example, the original specification describes an exemplary embodiment including rigid sheet material that comprises wood in the form of random wafer board, and the specification also mentions another example of rigid sheet flooring material that comprises wood in the form of oriented strand board. (See, e.g., page 4, lines 1-9.)

Applicant respectfully submits that all of the newly added claims should be allowable over all of the references cited in the Office Action dated August 15, 2003. Like claim 1, new independent claim 33 recites “at least one part of an interlocking assembly, . . . wherein the interlocking assembly is configured to interlock the edges of the panels via lateral movement of one panel with respect to the other.” Accordingly, claim 33 should be allowable over U.S. Patent 5,572,842 to Stief et al. (“Stief et al.”) for

reasons corresponding to those discussed in the Amendment filed February 13, 2004, at page 11, lines 9-18.

Regarding new independent claim 39, that claim includes the recitation of “a tongue located on . . . [an] upper member and a groove located on . . . [an] upper member,” which is also recited in claim 11. Therefore new claim 39 should be allowable over Stief et al. for reasons like those explained in the remarks addressing claim 11 which are set forth in the February 13, 2004 Amendment in the paragraph bridging pages 11 and 12.

With respect to new independent claim 42, that claim recites a plurality of flooring panels, including a first flooring panel that comprises a first upper member and a second a second flooring panel that comprises a second upper member. Since such recitations are also present in claim 14, claim 42 should be allowable over Stief et al. for reason analogous to those discussed in the February 13, 2004 Amendment at page 12, lines 8-18.

New independent claim 53 recites a “groove [that] has an opening facing in a lateral direction,” which is also recited in claim 24. Thus, claim 53 should be allowable over Stief et al. for reasons like those discussed in the February 13, 2004 Amendment in the paragraph bridging pages 12 and 13.

For at least the reasons set forth above, independent claims 33, 39, 42, and 53 should be allowable. Since new claims 27-32, 34-38, 40, 41, 43-52, 54, and 55 depend from one of claims 1, 11, 14, 24, 26, 33, 39, 42, and 53, those dependent claims should be allowable for at least the same reasons that the claims from which they depend are allowable.

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the application and issue a Notice of Allowability in a timely manner.

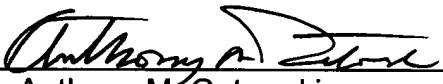
If a telephone conversation might advance prosecution of the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned (571-203-2774).

Because the February 13, 2004 Amendment and Request for Continued Examination constituted a complete response to the August 15, 2003 Office Action, no extension of time should be needed. If, for some reason, any extensions of time is needed, please grant any such extensions of time required to enter this Supplemental Amendment and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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